



NCLIS

U.S. National Commission on
Libraries and Information Science

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July 24, 2002

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education Appropriations
U. S. House of Representatives
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3516

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4907

Dear Representatives Regula and Obey:

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science to thank you for your past support of Federal funding for the Nation's libraries and to ask for your continued support as you mark up the FY 2003 appropriations bill in the coming weeks.

Library Services and Technology Act

As you know, H.R. 3784 reauthorizing the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) is pending. The section of the bill entitled the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) authorizes \$300 million in Federal funding for America's libraries. I urge you to fund the level of spending that will be authorized by this bill. This is an extraordinarily successful program that deserves to be continued with increased funding.

A soon to be published Commission report, funded by the National Center for Education Statistics of the Department of Education and prepared by the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, concludes that the Federal funds for libraries made available through LSTA have generated increases in state, local and other non-Federal support to libraries, as intended. The NCLIS study, which analyzed the first three years of LSTA funding (1998-2000), shows that state funding for financial assistance to libraries outpaced the growth of Federal funds and resulted in participation in the programs of a wider range of libraries, including school, academic,

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research and special libraries. According to our study, the states of Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Oregon, Rhode Island, and West Virginia, are among the states that experienced the greatest increase in funding from all sources during the period that was studied.

The original intent of LSTA was that all types of libraries should benefit from the consolidated funding. However, the inclusion of more types of libraries as beneficiaries of Federal funds during the first three years of LSTA occurred without increased funding, making it difficult for states to fully implement the broader vision of the 1996 Act. The increased authorization, if funded, fulfills the mandate of the original legislation.

Literacy Through School Libraries

In addition, the Literacy Through School Libraries program was established as part of the education legislation, Leave No Child Behind. A well-equipped and well-staffed school library should be a necessity for every school, not an optional program. The Senate appropriations bill, introduced on July 22, 2002, doubles Federal funding for school libraries from the FY 2002 level of \$12.5 million to \$25 million. While this is a generous increase, it is not sufficient to address the severe crisis in our school libraries, so I urge you to raise the FY 2003 appropriation to at least \$100 million. This will ensure that the funds for the improvement of school libraries will go to states as block grants and more school libraries in our poorest communities will benefit.

An April 2001 hearing by the Commission highlighted the fact that students have a higher level of academic achievement in schools with strong school libraries staffed with professional school librarians, as shown by studies in Alaska, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. In June 2002 First Lady Laura Bush hosted a White House Conference on School Libraries that reinforced these findings.

Yet reports indicate that school library funding for staff and materials is being dramatically cut back due to the limited fiscal resources in many school districts. Far too many schools lack a full-time school librarian and many elementary school libraries are staffed by volunteers and may only be open one to two days a week. Too many school libraries today have books with average copyright dates 20 to 30 years old, making them useless for curriculum support. Too many schools only have the ability to provide 15 minutes to a half-hour a week per student for either computer instruction or research. Increased Federal support can begin to improve the situation and ensure that no child is left behind.

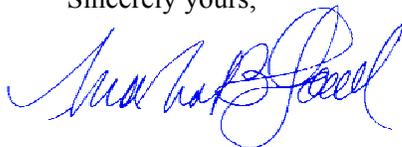
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Finally, the Commission's own FY 2003 request for \$2.8 million falls within the scope of the bill that you will mark up in the next few weeks. I urge you to ensure the continued existence of the Commission. Full funding would enable the Commission to continue and enhance our work on the evaluation of Federal funding for libraries, requirements for improvement in school libraries, access to government information, information literacy, information services for individuals with disabilities, the role of libraries in crisis information dissemination and management, and other important matters, as a basis for our policy advice to the President and the Congress.

If you would like additional information on any of these matters, please contact Judy Russell, Acting Executive Director of the Commission by phone at 202-606-9200 or by e-mail at jrussell@nclis.gov. The other members of the Commission join me in offering our assistance to Congress and seeking your continued generous support of the Nation's libraries and of the Commission.

Sincerely yours,



Martha B. Gould
Chairperson

CC: The Honorable C.W. Bill Young; The Honorable Jerry Lewis, California;
The Honorable Harold Rogers; The Honorable Joe Skeen;
The Honorable Frank R. Wolf; The Honorable Tom DeLay;
The Honorable Jim Kolbe; The Honorable Sonny Callahan;
The Honorable James Walsh; The Honorable Charles H. Taylor;
The Honorable David L. Hobson; The Honorable Ernest J. Istook, Jr.;
The Honorable Henry Bonilla; The Honorable Joe Knollenberg;
The Honorable Dan Miller; The Honorable Jack Kingston;
The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen; The Honorable Roger F. Wicker;
The Honorable George R. Nethercutt, Jr.;
The Honorable Randy "Duke" Cunningham; The Honorable Todd Tiahrt;
The Honorable Zach Wamp; The Honorable Tom Latham;
The Honorable Anne Northup; The Honorable Robert Aderholt;

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The Honorable Jo Ann Emerson; The Honorable John E. Sununu;
The Honorable Kay Granger; The Honorable John E. Peterson;
The Honorable Virgil Goode; The Honorable John Doolittle;
The Honorable Ray LaHood; The Honorable John Sweeney;
The Honorable David Vitter; The Honorable Don Sherwood;
The Honorable David R. Obey; The Honorable John P. Murtha;
The Honorable Norman D. Dicks; The Honorable Martin Olav Sabo;
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer; The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan;
The Honorable Marcy Kaptur; The Honorable Nancy Pelosi;
The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky; The Honorable Nita M. Lowey;
The Honorable José E. Serrano; The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro;
The Honorable James P. Moran; The Honorable John W. Olver;
The Honorable Ed Pastor; The Honorable Carrie P. Meek;
The Honorable David E. Price; The Honorable Chet Edwards;
The Honorable Robert E. "Bud" Cramer, Jr.;
The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy; The Honorable James E. Clyburn;
The Honorable Maurice D. Hinchey; The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard;
The Honorable Sam Farr; The Honorable Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.;
The Honorable Carolyn C. Kilpatrick; The Honorable Allen Boyd;
The Honorable Chaka Fattah; The Honorable Steven R. Rothman